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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 EA-10 NEA-11 IO-13 ISO-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
ACDA-12 MCT-01 HA-05 SCS-06 CA-01 OPR-02 SY-05
/136 W
----------115040 161834Z /50
O 161726Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6553
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 09311

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, MOPS, CASC, BE, CG
SUBJECT: SHABA INCURSIONS: BELGIAN REACTION

REF: A) STATE 122792 (NOTAL), B) KINSHASA 4796 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: BELGIAN GOVERNMENT VIEWS MILITARY SITUATION IN
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SHABA AS UNCLEAR AND ASKS FOREIGN MINISTER UMBA, WHO
WAS IN BRUSSELS MAY 15, TO PROVIDE A MORE COMPLETE
ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION. UMBA ASKS BELGIANS FOR
LIGHT ARMS, INCLUDING MORTARS, BUT BELGIAN RESPONSE,
ACCORDING TO CHEF DE CABINET CAHEN, WILL BE CONDITIONED
BY A FACTOR NOT PRESENT IN LAST YEAR'S SHABA INVASION:
THE PRESENCE OF SOME 2,000 BELGIAN CITIZENS IN KOLWEZI

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AS VIRTUALLY HOSTAGES OF THE INVADERS. SHOULD BELGIAN GOVERNMENT DECIDE TO TAKE SOME ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THE GOZ, FACT WILL NOT BE MADE PUBLIC DUE TO PRECARIOUS SITUATION OF THE BELGIANS IN KOLWEZI. CAHEN VIEWS WITH FAVOR A POSSIBLE U.S. APPROACH TO THE ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT RELAYING CONCERN FOR SAFETY OF U.S. CITIZENS (REFTEL A), BUT BELGIUM PLANS A MORE GRADUAL, TWO-STEP APPROACH OF ITS OWN. FOREIGN MINISTER SIMONET WILL CHAIR INTER-MINISTERIAL MEETING THE EVENING OF MAY 16 TO REVIEW TOTAL SITUATION IN ZAIRE AND GOZ REQUEST FOR HELP, BUT BELGIUM WILL TAKE NO ACTION WITHOUT FULL CONSULTATIONS WITH U.S. AND FRANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. WE CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER'S CHEF DE CABINET (CAHEN) THE MORNING OF MAY 16 AND FOUND HIM AND FOREIGN MINISTER SIMONET BENT OVER A TABLEFULL OF MAPS OF SHABA. AFTER SIMONET WITHDREW, CAHEN TOLD US THAT BELGIANS ARE PUZZLED BY LACK OF CLEAR INFORMATION ON WHAT IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING IN SHABA, INCLUDING INVADERS' INTENTIONS, DESPITE DIRECT TELEPHONE CONTACT WITH BELGIANS IN KOLWEZI. HE SAID SIMONET ASKED FOREIGN MINISTER UMBA AT THEIR MAY 15 MEETING IN BRUSSELS TO PROVIDE BELGIUM WITH A MORE COMPLETE ASSESSMENT OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN SHABA. HE SAID UMBA REQUESTED LIGHT ARMS, INCLUDING MORTARS, AND THAT BELGIAN INTER-MINISTERIAL MEETING CHAIRED BY SIMONET SCHEDULED FOR CONFIDENTIAL

1900 MAY 16 WILL REVIEW ALL ASPECTS OF THE NEW SHABA INCURSION, INCLUDING THE REQUEST FOR ARMS.

2. CAHEN SAID TWO QUESTIONS STILL NEEDED TO BE ANSWERED: WHETHER OR NOT THERE ARE REALLY CUBANS IN SHABA WITH THE INVADERS, AND THE DEGREE OF COMBATIVENESS OF THE FAZ THIS TIME AROUND. HE SAID BELGIANS REPORTING FROM KOLWEZI SAY THEY HAVE NOT SEEN ANY CUBANS AMONG THE INVADERS. CAHEN SAID BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS IN A TOUGHER SITUATION THIS TIME THAN WITH LAST YEAR'S SHABA INVASION SINCE THERE ARE SOME 2700 BELGIANS WHO ARE VIRTUALLY "HOSTAGES" OF THE INVADERS IN KOLWEZI. HE SAID THAT EVEN IF BELGIUM WERE TO DECIDE TO RESPOND TO ZAIRE'S APPEAL FOR HELP OR TO TAKE ANY OTHER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, SUCH ACTION WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN WITHOUT ANY PUBLICITY IN ORDER TO PREVENT ANY RETALIATION AGAINST THESE BELGIAN CITIZENS BY THE INVADERS. HE UNDERLINED THAT BELGIUM WOULD TAKE NO ACTION WITHOUT CONSULTING FULLY WITH THE U.S. AND FRANCE AND PROMISED TO GIVE US A READ-OUT MAY 17 ON TONIGHT'S MEETING.

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3. WE RAISED WITH CAHEN OUR CONSIDERATION OF A
POSSIBLE APPROACH TO THE ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH
THE ITALIANS OR THE CONGOLESE REGARDING SAFETY OF U.S.
CITIZENS (REFTEL A, PARA 4) AND ASKED FOR HIS REACTION.
HE REPLIED THAT HE SAW NO REASON WHY THE U.S. SHOULD NOT
TRY THIS APPROACH BUT WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES
FOR A POSITIVE RESPONSE. HE SAID BELGIUM HAD DECIDED
THAT A DIRECT APPROACH TO THE ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT WOULD
MOST LIKELY ELICIT AN UNHELPFUL RESPONSE TO THE EFFECT
THE GOA WAS UNINFORMED AND IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR
DEVELOPMENTS TAKING PLACE WITHIN ZAIRE. THEREFORE,
BELGIUM HAS INITIATED A MORE GRADUAL, TWO-STEP APPROACH
TO SECURING THE HELP OF ZAMBIA AND ANGOLA. INSTRUC-
TIONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO BELGIAN AMBASSADORS IN LUSAKA
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AND LUANDA INSTRUCTING THEM TO APPROACH HOST GOVERNMENTS
AND ASK IF THERE ARE ANY BELGIAN REFUGEES IN THE COUNTRY
FLEEING THE FIGHTING IN SHABA AND THEN ASK

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BRUSSELS 09311

WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE HOST GOVERNMENT IS REGARDING
THESE REFUGEES. CAHEN SAID THAT IF THE RESPONSES TO THESE
BELGIAN APPROACHES ARE JUDGED SUFFICIENTLY POSITIVE,
THEN BELGIUM WOULD THEN INITIATE THE SECOND PHASE AND
INSTRUCT AMBASSADORS TO ASK ZAMBIAN AND ANGOLAN
GOVERNMENTS IF THEY COULD BE HELPFUL IN THE PROCESS
OF SEEKING TO ASSURE THE SAFETY OF BELGIAN CITIZENS
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IN SHABA. CAHEN SAID PRECISE PHASE-TWO APPROACHES
WOULD BE TAILOREDTO RESPONSE TO FIRST APPROACH, AND
HE PROMISED TO KEEP US INFORMED AT EACH STEP.

4. WE WENT OVER MUCH THE SAME GROUND EARLIER MAY 16
WITH AF DIRECTOR LEBRUN AND ZAIRE DESK OFFICER
JAENEN, RESUMING THE CLOSE CONSULTATION AND EXCHANGE
OF VIEWS WITH BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ON SHABA
THAT WE HAD ESTABLISHED DURING THE LAST SHABA INCURSION.
LEBRUN VIEWED THIS YEAR'S SHABA INVASION,WITH ITS
QUICK MOVE ON THE KEY COPPER BELT AT KOLWEZI, AS
MORE DAMAGING TO GOZ THAN LAST'S YEAR'S EFFORT.
HOWEVER, LEBRUN THOUGHT INVADING FORCES WERE DISORGANIZED
AND LACKING IN A CLEAR PLAN OF WHAT TO DO IN KOLWEZI.
HE TOLD US THAT AMBASSADOR RITWEBER DE MOOR WILL BE
LEAVING BRUSSELS FOR KINSHASA MAY 16 AND THAT THE
BELGIAN DCM, PRESENTLY IN NEW YORK, HAS BEEN
INSTRUCTED TO RETURN TO POST. OVERCOMPLEMENT OFFICERS
ARE TO BE SENT FROM BRUSSELS TO BEEF UP BELGIAN EMBASSIES
IN LUANDA, LUSAKA AND BRAZZAVILLE.

5. FOOTNOTE: JAPANESE EMBASSY HERE HAS BEEN STAYING
IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ON
DEVELOPMENTS IN SHABA AND HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN TO US
FOR THE SAFETY OF APPROXIMATELY 100 JAPANESE CITIZENS
THERE. CHAMBERS

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Type: TE
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